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For Zion's Herald.

## DANTE.

In the *Divina Commedia*, this immortal writer has pointed out the fact that God respects not the social position of man, the family to which they belong, the religion in which they were trained, or the particular age in the world's history wherein they are to play their part, in his history of eminent gifts and opportunities upon men. The time when Dante made his appearance and wrought his work in the earth, was one which human wisdom, however much it may now approve the selection, would have been slow to elect. The dense night of the dark ages still lay heavy upon the world. The hierarchical power of a monstrously corrupted but exceedingly potent church, was yet combined with the cunning of political magistrates to hold mankind in direct servitude. Books were rare; knowledge was the sole privilege of the few; the philosophy of Aristotle and the subtleties of the scholastic still occupied general attention; the Latin was the language of the schools, and in this tongue all great works were written throughout Europe. Vernacular literature was either wholly unknown or of the most insignificant character in Italy, Spain, France, England, and Germany. In illustration of his own saying, therefore, Dante stands forth as the figure of central interest in his century, and the intellectual and imaginative peer of the foremost sons of song whom the world has ever produced.

It is but natural, then, that great regret should now be felt because such scanty materials exist for a thorough biography of this eminent poet. Various accounts of his life have been written at different periods, but unhappily they all yield us only the same few unimportant events of his external career, a few characteristic anecdotes, and such hints of his character and glimpses of his life as his works may afford. Dante, or Durante Allighieri, was born at Florence, May 14, 1265, and died at Ravenna, Sept. 14, 1321. His ancestry was respectable, both for character and social position. It is easy to see that, although the poet pretends to be of the noblest of families, his pretensions to honor, either upon illustrious descent, ample wealth alone, or upon both together, he was himself proud because of his own unrivaled endowments was added the gift of genius. He rejoices upon meeting his knightly ancestor, Cacciaguida, in the invisible world. He fortunately finds him in Paradise; which fact, when we remember that the whole matter of locating the poet in the poet's hands, shows Dante's estimation of his personal worth. Their conversation, also, is of such kind as reveals in both an equally noble, generous, and patriotic spirit.

Of Dante's parents and early life we know comparatively little. The one generally suggestive fact which we do know from his own statements, is his early love for Beatrice, or the poet writes the name, Beatrice, daughter of Folco Portinari, a respectable citizen of Florence. The account which Dante gives of this passion, and its effect upon his life and character, in the *Vita Nuova*, is somewhat mystical and perplexing. The question which this work has always raised in the minds of its readers, is whether the author's love was a real passion, or a poetic and soul-arousing dream. The conduct of Dante deepens our difficulty. He did not seek the presence of his loved one. He made her no offer of marriage; but saw her apparently without repugnance, become the wife of another. He sought another lady for his own wife, and lived a good and faithful husband. His love for Beatrice, such as it was, still continued. His own Gemma was aware of this peculiar condition of things without being there in any trouble. In the *Commedia*, moreover, Beatrice is spoken of in such a way as to leave in doubt whether she is a real personage or an imaginative personification, like the *Wisdom* of Solomon.

Probably enough, the basis of all this romance or mysticism was a real boyish passion for the fair Florentine damsel, in whose awakening influence the young poet first learned the mystery of his own soul, the spring of life's purest joy and deepest sorrow, and the power of unselfish affection. To purify the wanderer safely through Hell and Purgatory, and entrust him, at last, to her own better guidance through Paradise. To speculate and suggest concerning the poet's meaning is easy here; to conclude, difficult. Our purpose is simply to give some idea of the man. His character is best shown in the few authentic stories of him which have been preserved.

It is singular that most of these should illustrate Dante's naturally excessive pride; that even from a single word which he lets drop, it is enough to know that he was the great deity in his character. When he was exiled from Florence through political jealousy, but upon a pretended charge of peculation, he was so bitterly enraged that he would never allow any allusion to the story, in his presence. So great was his affection for his native city that he bowed even his pride so far as to supplicate in his works, permission to return thither; but so intense was his pride that he refused to use permission, and returned under an ordinance of amnesty. This he affirmed under an acknowledgment of guilt, which he had never incurred. Such a confession would be worse to him than exile.

While he was a sharer in the hospitality of the lord of Verona, Cane Grande della Scala, (the Great Dog of the Staircase) his haughty bearing secured him no special favor with the other guests. Upon provocation, his keen tongue did not even spare his patron. Thus, Cane one day expressed to him his surprise that a silly buffoon could be such agreeable company, while so wise a man as the poet was quite the reverse. Dante rejoined: "You would not wonder if you knew that friendship lies in similarity of tastes and of mind."

It is said that, on one occasion, a boy was concealed under the dinner-table, where, in accordance with the custom of the time, each guest threw the bones which were left in his meat, who collected them all into a pile at the poet's feet. On rising from the meal, the heap was discovered; whereupon Cane said, amid general laughter, that Dante must be a great eater of meat. The fiery Allighieri retorted: "Sir, you would not see so many bones even if I were a dog." (Lucerne, a pun on the Prince's name.)

One who knew him during his life, reports a common remark of his, that reveals his consciousness, of his own unrivaled literary power. "This man," he declares, "used often to say that no word ever made him say what he did not wish, but he made him say what he did not wish."

We can easily see that the poet was deeply political. Indeed, this is the key to his entire political career. Parties were of no significance to him,

except as they involved the fortunes of Florence and Italy. He would accept any leader, enter into any alliance, which would forward these; he unhesitatingly deserted to that would not make them foremen. He was doomed never to see his dreams of Italy, free, great and united, realized. Then as now the temporal power of the Pope prevented this result. That power was gigantic then, now it is a vanishing shadow. Dante's dream will soon be a dead reality.

It would be a consolation to believe that Dante was happy in his life; but his sensitive organization and quick-killing pride, joined with political misfortunes, blinding. He won immortality by his wondrous vision, but seemed homeless on earth from too great contemplation of paradise. His portraits all reveal that deep sadness of soul which not rarely is the duty of the most gifted men. Especially is this true of the one, representing him at the age of thirty, painted by Giotto. One might easily anticipate that of the ripe years of such a young man, the story might be told which is connected with his visit to the monastery of Santa Croce del Corvo. Botta, in his Dante, declares that in 1308, the hermits who resided there, one day saw a stranger of sad aspect, somewhat bent as if oppressed by the burden of many sorrows, standing on that lovely spot, and gazing with kindling eyes at the charming picture which lay before him, enshrined by a distant horizon, reaching by the blue sky, reflected in the blue sea. One of the monks approached and kindly addressed him; but the stranger, absorbed in the contemplation of the scene, made no reply. When again addressed and asked what he desired, sadly turning his eyes towards the speaker, he answered, peace.

After a painful life, filled with toils and gushes with sorrows, having won a just place beside the noblest poets, and made the Tuscan tongue, which had before been despised as vulgar, classic language, the weak exile expired at Ravenna, in the fifty-sixth year of his age. Dedicating his life to his immortal *Commedia* have issued from the press, and they will continue to multiply until time shall end. Let us hope that he found in heaven that peace which he coveted in time.

LECTOR.

## CONGREGATIONAL SINGING—A TRUE INCIDENT.

'Twas Sabbath eve, the village bell Rang sweetly on the fragrant air; That little church I knew it well— Its little worshippers were there; They knelt before a throne of grace, Their pastor's voice the silence broke; The Lord was in their hearts, and place And every soul to rapture woke.

Then burst in one united strain, That seemed new vigor to inspire, "All hail the power of Jesus' name!" The congregation was the choir. No heart, however cold or stern, Could hear unmoved a theme so sweet; Its better feelings met to turn, And bring to a Savior's feet.

O never till my latest hour, Can I those thrilling tones forget; They bound me by a sacred power, That lingers round my memory yet. God grant the time may not be long, When all our churches thus shall ring With Zion's pure and hallowed song. Their congregations lead to sing.

Fanny Crosby, in *Christian Advocate*.

## SHALL JONATHAN DIE?

History is perpetually repeating itself. Hence its value as a lamp to our feet. A national crisis has now come, strikingly similar to that which occurred in Israel under King Saul. Jonathan with his armor-bearing, by a bold assault upon the Philistines—a piece of sheer presumption from a military point of view—secured a decisive victory over the hordes of the Philistines, and his aid into the dust for many years. His whimsical father issues an arbitrary and foolish decree prohibiting the fainting soldiers from tasting the honey which abounded in the forests through which they marched. The penalty was death. Jonathan inadvertently touched his rod to the honey, and put it to his tongue. The order has been disobeyed; Jonathan must die. The hero who had saved the nation's life at the risk of his own, must be led to execution for no crime. The people becoming acquainted with the state of the facts, rise up as one man in indignant protest against this style of rewarding the nation's deliverer, exclaiming, "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid; as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with us and for us." So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

Here is a very emphatic popular vote worthy of imitation by the American people. Our Jonathan, the loyal African warrior, who has wrought a great salvation for America, by the caprice of our Saul, is delivered to the executioner. Have we come to this, that four millions of Americans, in a nominally free land, in time of peace, hang upon the word of one man? Eschines says that monarchies are governed by the whims of their masters, but democracies are ruled by the will of the people. Into which class has our government come in the year 1866, when the people, in the persons of their chosen representatives, are set at defiance, and their powers audaciously usurped? How near we are to the point where we shall be quoted as another exemplification of the truth attested by universal history, that the forms of liberty always survive the essence.

But history is not a mere testimony; no tyrant can withstand the expressed and determined will of the people. Saul could not maintain his high-handed career against the pressure of universal popular repression. Though his kingly prerogative was damaged, and his pride of power was humbled, he bowed his royal head to the mandate of the sovereign people. Majestic indeed was that uprising of a magnanimous people against this mean act of petty despotism. The second grand act of popular government is upon the American Republic. We have stood the first test which revealed in us the ability to endure a gigantic and protracted civil war, together with those abridgments of the liberties of the citizen requisite to enhance the power of the executive. We poured out our blood and our treasure, and yielded not to the clamors of the faithless and the treacherous for a shameful surrender of our national unity and honor. We are now called to vote an usurper of our liberties, and we have a good prospect of being very soon forced to peach and depose him from his high office which he dishonors and betrays, in order to save the nation from being completely handed over to the power of unrepentant rebels.

How rapid the downward steps of Andrew Johnson, and how long his strides, from the extreme of philanthropy where Moses II. stretched out his rod to open through a sea of blood a highway for the disenthralled host, to the extreme of negro hatred where he fits up his rod with the blood of his country's benefactors.

Do we exist in our national character the high qualities of courage, firmness and self-control requisite for a grapple with an oppressor

clothed with supreme authority? The act is unprecedented in American history, but it is revolutionary, since it is provided for by the Constitution. The House of Representatives is charged with the solemn duty of preserving the freedom of the people by impeaching the President when he abuses his high office, and the Senate is the august tribunal which must pronounce the sentence. But above all this is a greater power, which must utter its imperial decree before Congress will brace itself for the contest; that power is the voice of the people charging its servants to perform their constitutional duty.

All this is plain talk; but since the President's guilty connivance at the extinction of liberty in blood, in the city of New Orleans, not only necessity of speech, but boldness of action is necessary. New England was represented in that St. Bartholomew of the President, in the person of Rev. John W. Horton, whose blood now calleth from the ground for vengeance upon the avowed traitor who deliberately betrayed loyalty to treason. To the anti-slavery men of New England, especially to the Methodist Episcopal and to the Wesleyan Methodist Churches, is the name John Horton fragrant as ointment poured forth. Heroically he was the slain in the cause in which the father was an undaunted standard-bearer. The final victory hastens.

For freedom's battle once begun, Requested by his country's voice, Though baffled oft, is ever won.

Lima, Aug. 22. DANIEL STEELE.

## FOR ZION'S HERALD. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

REPLY TO BROTHER M'KEOWN—NO. III.

My two preceding articles assumed and maintained the following: That the social compact gives society no right to put the murderer to death; that Capital Punishment is neither expedient, necessary nor effectual to prevent crime; that it tends to increase rather than to diminish murder; that it fosters the spirit of revenge and retaliation, the parent of crimes; that the punishment of death for murder is founded upon the principle of retaliation which is in opposition to the spirit of the gospel; and that all history, observation and experience unambiguously condemn the death penalty as a punishment for crime. I have yet to see these points successfully controverted.

My position in this article is to notice somewhat critically the scriptural argument. But first, and by way of parenthesis, let me remark that Bro. M'Keown more than intimates that those who seek to abolish the death penalty are actuated mainly by theological motives; forgetting the natural inference that those who oppose it, are not thus influenced at all; an intimation which carries on its face its own refutation. And again, that those who seek to enlist popular sympathy in behalf of the criminal are themselves committing a crime against society; are holding forth the workings of human governments by lessening the security of human life. How strangely untrue this is, is seen at once in the history and uniform experience of the Christian Quakers, that when none are more moral, nor who tolerate crime less, and yet no class are more consistently opposed to all Capital Punishment.

In considering the theological aspect of this question Bro. M'Keown says: "Human law is, or ought to be, a transcript of the divine law. Human government when righteous, is an imitation of the divine." Very true; and per consequence, as a necessary corollary, I see to require, as a condition, that human governments which to me are so manifestly at variance with the operations of Providence, so opposed to the evident designs and spirit of heaven. In proportion as we approximate to the divine method, does humanity rise towards perfection. He cannot err who faithfully follows God's merciful and immutable plan.

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and divine dispensation, must we seek to imitate their ancient penal code, especially in those particulars in which it is farthest from the benign and spirit of the gospel? Nay. But rather the lesson to be gathered from this, indicates, does it not, that we are led by a special Providence who is ever adapting means and experiences according to the needs and necessities of his children. Prof. Goldwin Smith says: "The object of God's dealings with man as recorded in the Bible was, either to put human society at once in a state of perfection, without further effort, political, social or intellectual, on the part of man, in which case the inference is irresistible that every institution enjoined in the Bible is part of a perfect scheme, and that every institution mentioned in the Bible without condemnation will be lawful to the end of time; or the object was to implant in man's heart a principle—the love of God and man, which should move him to work (God also working in him) for the improvement of his own state and the good of his fellow-men, and for the transforming of his and their life into the image of his Maker; in which case it by no means follows that any social institution recognized in Scripture for the time being, or mentioned by it without condemnation, is forever good or lawful in the sight of God. And that this, not the other was the real object, is matter of hourly experience; for man labors till now to improve his state and that of his fellows; and his conscience, which is the voice of God, tells him that he does well. \* \* \* Why should God choose gradual improvement rather than precipitate perfection, this is not the place to inquire. That he does so, appears from the history not only of the moral but of the physical world. The Bible recognizes progress. Moses gave the Jews certain things for the hardness of their hearts; not, of course, for their wickedness, to which God would not bend his law, but for their rude and uncivilized state. And not merely for their rudeness and want of civilization, but for the primitive narrowness of the circle of their affections; for it is only in the course of history and with the increasing range of man's social vision, that his affection extends from the primitive family to the tribe, from the tribe to the nation, and from the nation to mankind."

The command *Thou shalt not kill*, is a command alike both of nature and revelation; one of God's constitutional laws established in the eternal nature of things; addressed to humanity as a whole, to be violated no more by the legislator than by the subject. But to Noah and his posterity as a portion of the human race, in a particular state or condition, with adaptation to particular circumstances, God said: "Surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require it. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," etc. High authorities declare that this law of penal retribution is not founded in the direct relations which exist between God and man, for the taking of the life of a man can in no measure serve to repair the injury which he has done, nor to expiate his guilt in the sight of God. It is therefore founded solely in the social relations existing between man and man, and is necessarily developed by particular circumstances. This is evidenced and emphatically confirmed by what Jesus said in his rebuke to those who in his day were inclined to practice this old law of retaliation, "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth."

It is said that "the Hebrew word translated 'require' (*Qasam*) is actually used transitively and intransitively; and that the law of retaliation is not a law of retribution, but a law of reparation; and that the idea which the original record clearly and strongly presents, is that of one man running after or vindictively pursuing another." Since then, under like circumstances, the "avenger of blood," in those days the nearest kinsman, has ever pursued the homicide. The declaration to Noah is evidently not a revelation of what God as our moral and spiritual guide prefers, nor as adapted to, or compatible with, a higher and better condition of human nature.

Rantoul says: "The Hebrew particle translated 'whoso sheddeth,' answers to our English word 'shedding,' and so is to be rendered 'whosoever sheddeth'; and the grammatical construction will be consulted by substituting 'its' for 'his.' The clause will then read, 'whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' This makes it consistent with the context. In the Hebrew text, 'whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' The provision conforms naturally with that dread and fear with which beasts are to regard man; it accords precisely with the main object of the law itself, that blood shall not be eaten, in order to cultivate a reverence for the principle of life; and we see the force of the reason for it, that man is made in the image of the Deity, which would not be apparent if it were understood to mean that because murder was a marred of God's image, therefore, when slain, it had been once marred, it should be marred again. That the divine wisdom did prescribe both these regulations, to eat no blood, and to slay the beast which destroyed a man, is an unquestioned fact, and the latter would seem likely to be as effectual as the former in heightening the estimation of human life, which a second marred of the divine image, in revenge for the first, would only tend to cheapen. 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed,' is an expression precisely parallel to that of the New Testament, 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' Yet this is manifestly not an enunciation of our Saviour's will, nor the promulgation of a positive law of God; but declaratory of what general place takes, as 'violence begets violence, blood instigates to blood.' Instead of this being a perpetual mandate of divine will and authority for man to shed blood for blood, and take life for life, we know that it is the divine will and pleasure that mankind shall rise above this condition, and naturally live in that state where the manifestations of such a spirit are impossible."

That this law was not meant to be universal, is seen in the case of the first murderer Cain; that it was not so regarded even by the Jews, they themselves failing to enforce it in many instances, as in the case of Moses, David and others; that while we know it was often broken, we are not aware of its having been once enforced even under a theory for hundreds of years as to its promulgation. When all history, observation and the aid of teacher experience all demonstrate the fact that, "the blood we shed will but cause the shedding of more blood, in an endless vicious progression," shall we be found advocating the continuance of this revengeful practice, twenty centuries after Christianity has superseded the Mosaic law?

For Zion's Herald.

THE POWER OF THE VOICE IN PREACHING.

We have very much said by the advocates of extemporaneous preaching, concerning the importance of the right use of the eye, as a means of arresting and holding the attention of a congregation, and of the imperious disadvantages, to this end, of the presence and use of a manuscript.

No one will concede more touching the necessity of looking a congregation directly in the eye in order to secure and rivet their attention, than the writer—a habit by no means inconsistent at all, together with the delivery of a sermon from manuscript. I have seen many a preacher, though speaking extemporaneously, so confine his eyes to the Bible before him, or allow them listlessly and idly to wander about, that hearers had the advantage of them less than in the case of any good practiced reader. As important, however, as is the right use of the eye, I am satisfied, both by observation and experience, that quite as much, nay, vastly more depends upon the right use of the voice—a matter that seems to be quite uniformly overlooked by these zealous advocates of extemporaneous discourse.

I am entirely satisfied that a man may read a sermon, provided first, it be a good one; and no man certainly has any business to read any other, provided it abound richly in good thoughts, pointed out, vigorously, sententiously expressed; and provided, second, it be delivered in mellow, well-modulated, human, social, colloquial, many tones—tones that are full of soul and music, and interest a congregation, and even unconsciously in the use of the prevailing constrained and artificial intonations—the customary monotonous, sanctimonious, "ministerial" drawl.

It may be insisted that the extemporaneous method of preaching, notwithstanding these manifold abuses and drawbacks, is as much better adapted to the right use of the voice, as it is evidently to a right use of the eye—to a natural and effective use of the organs of speech, as it is to a natural and easy gesticulation. It is no part of my present purpose to detract in the least from the obviously decided advantages connected with what is called extemporaneous preaching. I desire simply to say that while a well-studied discourse may be delivered from manuscript in the most pleasing and effective manner by a proper natural use of the voice, together also with the eye, the majority of our preachers, though speaking "without notes," fall to a greater or less extent, and strange to say, through the improper use of both these organs, but more especially the voice. Let us get over our distinctively ministerial intonations, this intolerable monotonous drawl, even at the expense of the effect on certain pious souls who may deplore the absence of the customary "heavenly tones," and cultivate rather natural, social, many tones; intonations that shall be distinct with the very meaning, and with the feeling which we would convey.

Monson, Mass. R. H. H.

## FOR ZION'S HERALD. OUR VETERAN PREACHERS.

SUGGESTED BY OUR CENTENARY.

Twice fifty years are almost fled! Whirling on by the wind they tell Of some, resting with the dead, Of battles where they fell; And dying, more than conquerors proved, The victory won through Him they loved. The Spirit's sword, with mighty power They wielded in the bloodless fight; And praying for the coming hour When they should put these to flight, Unfurled the banner of the cross. And devils fled with heavy loss. 'O'er hill and dale in single file, These veterans of the cross marched on. From day to day for many a mile, With aching heart, and foot made sore; For their Christ, their hearts were torn, And burdened the crown they so much sought. The call "to arms!" is heard around, And we now volunteer, Though young, we join Emmanuel's band, Our Captain's voice we hear; We'll die ere we our shield shall lose, And death before retreat we choose. Benton, N. H. A. B. B.

## FOR ZION'S HERALD. SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER'S INSTITUTE.

1. The success of Teachers' Institutes in advancing the interests of secular education throughout the country, has suggested to our Sunday School men the desirableness and practicability of employing a similar method for the more thorough training of the teachers to whom is committed by the church the work of religious instruction.

2. In all that we now say in behalf of the intellectual qualifications of the Sunday School teacher, we must not be understood as undervaluing personal piety. Do we say against the flame because we plead for a clear and transparent medium through which it may shine? Give us grace, but give us knowledge, and give us tact.

3. Teaching is an art. The teacher needs more written or oral directions. He needs illustration. He should be drilled in the art of management and instruction. He should be permitted to examine, compare, and discuss various plans of teaching. He needs practice under the eye of experienced educators. There should be some place to which he may bring the difficulties which have embarrassed him, that, if possible, they may be removed.

4. How shall inexperienced teachers, and older scholars who will soon be teachers, enjoy these facilities? Not at the teachers' meeting, for too few are the schools that hold them. Not at the ordinary convention, for there we only make speeches. Our answer is this: Organize and hold Sunday School Teachers' Institutes at such times and places as will accommodate all the officers and teachers of all our schools. Establish teachers' meetings, and put the institute feature into them. Keep up our district conventions, but make institutes of them, and everywhere organize regular institutes and normal classes, that the work of teacher-training may go on.

5. But what are institute exercises? They differ from convention speeches just as an actual plough differs from the picture of a plough. They require more instead of talk. At an institute some one teaches a Bible class, instead of telling how a Bible class should be taught. The teacher is watched, criticized, his good methods commended, his faults brought out. Or, some one turns the institute into a school, and shows how in his own school he calls to order, opens, conducts, and closes a session. This gives rise to a comparison of programs and plans. A teacher or minister gives a lesson in sacred history and geography. All present are students. He uses the blackboard and maps; communicates facts, calls for their again, drills the institute in concert answers, etc. Again, the institute becomes a grand Bible class, and spends two hours or more in the critical study of some doctrine or Bible fact. An infant or elementary class is brought in, and an experienced teacher gives a model lesson. The institute listens to carefully prepared lectures on various subjects, as "Illustration in teaching;" "The art of asking questions;" "The mind of a child;" "Memory—its power and cultivation;" "The teacher in the preparation of his lesson;" "Bible architecture;" "Psalms;" "Manners and customs of the Bible times," etc., etc. These and many other exercises may be introduced. The practical advantages are apparent.

6. How can we hold the institute? We answer,

(1.) Devote to it at least one session of every district convention; (2.) Prepare a programme in advance; (3.) Put your best men on it; (4.) Read our "Sunday School Journal for Teachers and Young People," and there you will find from time to time programmes, reports, and all needed for practical directions; (5.) Correspond with the Corresponding Secretary, or the General Agent of our Sunday School Union, either of whom will be glad to render any assistance in his power. (6.) Provide at the annual meeting of the district Sunday School Convention for a series of institutes on the district through the year; (7.) Let the district be divided into four, six, or ten sub-districts, as its size may require; (8.) Let the annual district Sunday School Convention elect a president or conductor, who shall attend all the institutes on the district; or the services of some efficient and experienced Sunday School man from abroad may be secured; (9.) On each sub-district let a resident vice president and resident secretary be appointed, who, with the president, shall form the business committee for that sub-district; (10.) Let the president or conductor carry with him a record of each institute; its resolutions, order of exercises, with the names of all officers and teachers; (11.) Let him also provide himself with catalogues of Sunday School books and requisites, for gratuitous distribution. In this way the abundant provisions of our Sunday School Union at 200 Mulberry Street, New York, at Cincinnati, Chicago, and the depositories generally, may be brought to the knowledge of thousands who are singularly ignorant of them.

J. H. VINCENT.

## FOR ZION'S HERALD. CONSISTENCY.

"Consistency is a jewel." This is true but true. But human character is full of inconsistencies. And many are seen in professed Christians. As a consequence, the church is short of its power, and Christ-redeemed spirits are lost forever. It is not supposed that Methodists are worse in general than other Christians, but it must be confessed that we are very guilty. Of one of these inconsistencies I wish to say a word to the readers of the *Herald*. It is in regard to dress.

Our Discipline in one of its general rules forbids "The putting on of gold or costly apparel." This is no advice, but positive prohibition, just as much so as the taking of the name of God in vain, or the profaning the day of the Lord. Now it is undeniable that this rule is commonly broken. Those who keep it are the exceptions, and are deemed singular by the mass of the church. A great proportion of Methodist preachers, even, wear gold and costly apparel. Let any one look at them when assembled in Conference, and he will see a glaring inconsistency between our rule and our practice. Gold bosom studs are worn, gold watches are attached to the person by gold chains, from which long gold keys hang; gold-bowed spectacles aid the failing sight of the older members (so that the evil is not confined to the juniors), and Methodist D.D.s are seen flourishing gold-headed canes. It is amusing, or would be were it not for the sad inconsistency, to see the display of new hats at every Conference. The slightest change in the shape of a hat made by the mandate of the tyrant fashion, necessitates the purchase of a new hat, though the old one may be worn but half a dozen times. Of course the evil is not confined to the preachers. The flock obediently follow the example of their pastors. I have seen a Methodist probationer kneel at the altar and "renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world," while a Methodist preacher sprinkled the baptismal water upon her head, the hair of which was kept in place by a silver comb, of the value of twenty dollars. I have seen Methodist communicants kneel at the table of their dying Lord, with their persons so arrayed in gay apparel, and their bonnets (in the latest style) so bedecked with flaunting ribbons and artificial flowers, and wearing immense bosom-pins of gold (or imitation), that I have said to myself, Are these the Methodists, that peculiar people, devoted to God and the work of spreading scriptural holiness?

Now if we conclude that it is right thus to rob God, and suffering humanity, thus to conform to the vain world, and thus to ignore those old fogies, Peter, Paul, and John Wesley, let us by all means change our rule. Let delegates be sent to the very next General Conference, instructed to strike out the rule on dress, that we may be consistent.

M. SHERMAN.

## FOR ZION'S HERALD. ACTIVITIES OF NATURE.

Nature, like the artistic cognate, presents herself as transparent, open-handed and perfect. Often she hides herself in mystery and eludes our grasp, just at the moment our imagination is soaring with her beauty. She smiles in the dewdrop, and laughs in the glittering gems of night; she weeps her love-tears in the gentle showers, and charms us with their sweet perfumes. She pleases our fancy by displaying her brightest colors, and mingling them with softest shades, and tinging the horizon with delicate blushes. She woos our hearts, fanning our temples with her cool breezes on a sultry evening, and whispering of music as she floats through tall trees her great harpsichord.

She courts our admiration, reflecting the beautiful skies in the glassy lake or winding stream by which we wander. She excites our wonder, leading us up craggy cliffs and lofty mountains, where their haze reflects an ever changing light and color; or in the flowery meadows, glorified by colorful reflections from above, unsetting the coloring of their petals. She girdles the watery firmament above with a belt of exquisite colors, which, fading out in mellow tints are lost in the deep blue concave of heaven.

This nature seeks to bewitch every sense of man, and court his attention; she invites him to watch her while she works in order that he may understand her; but not till after the lapse of centuries did he begin to observe and study her, and by his skill bring forth what she had concealed in her bosom.

As man commenced his labors, unknown treasures and new riches unfolded. Flowers and fruits were multiplied to infinity and brought to perfection, noxious species were reduced, confined and banished. The depths of the earth opened at his bidding, and yielded precious metals. Rivers were directed and contracted, the sea itself subjected and by man's continued labors and skill is made to hold in its bosom the subtle medium for our thoughts, the annihilator of space, the rival of the earth and the connecting link of nations. The earth is made accessible in every part, and communication is established everywhere as so many witnesses of the strength and union of society; and man no longer looks upon the various phases of nature as coquetry, but as an exponent of a sublime reality.

But man was not made merely capable of adorning and cultivating nature, but is the only living being capable of knowing the Creator who made him his works. God has made him spectator of the universe and a witness of his wonders. The divine impulse which animates him enables him to participate in the divine mysteries, and to see

and read in the book of nature a copy of the Deity. Nature is the exterior throne of the Divine Majesty, and the student who continues its study rises by degrees to the interior throne of Omnipotence. Nature by her activity urges man to a life of labor and thought; to be ever moving, conscious that he lives in a world full of material for the perfecting of the great picture sketched by the divine pencil. Time stretched from eternity to eternity is the canvas; human agency the painter; and the whole of life, embracing all its words, acts and motives, completes the picture and impresses it with immortality.

R. H. W.

## FOR ZION'S HERALD. "SOCIAL ELEMENT OF METHODISM."

Where there is doubt respecting a given subject, it is well to elicit the views of others. We are helpers together with Christ. His own light shines within our hearts that it may be diffused throughout our whole being and life, so that it may enlighten others and lead them to the "light of life." We will be thankful, then, that Christ is pleased to employ us as co-workers with him.

It is our privilege to have such a blessed experience of his love and truth shining through our whole soul that there remains no doubt, no darkness, no anxiety in regard to the limits of our privileges and duties in worldly amusements or recreations. The sum of my experience is this: As I learn more and more of Christ and his salvation, get nearer and nearer to him, his world with all its interests falls lower and lower, so that my earnest, aspiring soul craves and claims the blessedness and fullness of Christ's love and grace. With this experience, how can I stoop or desire to participate in the trifling or vain amusements which have nothing of Christ in them, and tend to dissipate the mind and affections, rather than to draw me nearer to him?











